



USAID
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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

January 2008



BiH Parliament in session

Photo courtesy of BiH Parliament

Legislators & Auditors Vow to Stand as One

It is a frustrating fact that in Bosnia-Herzegovina publicizing inefficiency or even corruption doesn't always lead to change. Reports are written. People are informed. But no action is taken. Part of the problem is that while auditors can identify areas in government or state-owned enterprises that need improvement, they don't have the ability to effect change. That power belongs to the legislators who can mandate reforms. But when USAID took a look at the situation, it became obvious that missing from the picture was a strong link between auditors and legislators.



Dusanka Majkic

To address the gap, USAID sponsored a trip for eight BiH

auditors and legislators to see how their counterparts work together in the U.S. states of New York and Wisconsin. The trip was an eye-opener, says USAID Economics Office Head Gregg Wiitala. "I think it helped them realize the power legislatures have to insist on reforms by withholding funding."

"Legislatures have the power to insist on reforms by withholding funding."

--Gregg Wiitala, USAID/BiH Economics Office Head

"The study tour was very useful and helped me realize that the system we currently have in place is not efficient enough," says Dusanka Majkic, Chairperson of the BiH House of

Media



BiH media center wins international award for series on food safety
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Avian Flu



USAID educates children and their families on the dangers of bird flu
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Peoples Finance and Budget Committee. As a result, Majkic and her counterpart in the House of Representatives are proposing to replace their own House-level committees with two joint Parliamentary-level ones: one for budget issues and one specifically to deal with auditor's reports.

Additionally, Majkic says auditors will no longer be left to make their cases on their own. "In the future the auditing institutions and parliamentary committees will speak to the public with one voice," she promises.



BiH citizens were shocked to learn the food they eat can make them sick

Investigative Stories Get World's Attention

Contaminated food. Shady dealings by politicians. Law enforcement officials breaking the very laws they are paid to enforce. These are just some of the stories that earned Bosnia and Herzegovina's Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) international recognition with the Online News Association's (ONA) Journalism Award for best investigative story at a small organization's website. The award was given in Toronto for CIN's series on widespread problems with food safety. Winners in other categories included Wired Magazine, the Associated Press and the Washington Post.

CIN also won the Journalism Integrity Award in BiH from Transparency International, who said: "The Center for Investigative Reporting's uncompromised and systematic work gathering and analysis of information has provided the citizens of BiH the possibility to learn if the officials they elect actually work for their best interests."

"It's an honor to be mentioned with these other fine organizations and this proves that Bosnian journalists are doing some of the best work in the world in investigative reporting," said Svjetlana Celic, CIN's deputy managing editor. "Our goal was simple. We wanted to find out if our food is safe and we

now know it is not."

Early on, CIN had a rocky start. Editors complained that the stories were too American and too long. But as time went on, CIN learned how to better target its reporting to local readers. And something began to change. Government agencies started to act on CIN stories.

An international judge was fired when CIN uncovered a background of abuse of authority. A story on illegal workers led to a crackdown on employers who hired illegally. CIN wrote about a high-ranking law enforcement official who was involved in a fatal hit and run. With the statute of limitations about to expire, reporters doggedly followed the story until officials were prompted to act. The agent was eventually sentenced to two and a half years in prison.



CIN paid a lab to test food for contaminants

Earlier this year, CIN was also awarded the Global Shining Light award for investigative reporting for its series on energy traders. The award is given out by the Global Network of Investigative Journalists.

NEWS IN BRIEF ♦ NEWS IN BRIEF ♦ NEWS IN BRIEF ♦ NEWS IN BRIEF

♦ As part of its aid to Srebrenica, USAID recently included the Srebrenica Basic Court in its Model Court Initiative. The Initiative works with 17 courts in BiH to introduce reform activities, including a common case numbering system, judicial and court management, case backlog reduction, and public access to court services. ♦ USAID and the Norwegian

Government will jointly fund a new \$5 million program to increase use of value-added information and communication technology (ICT) among BiH small and medium enterprises in wood processing, agriculture, tourism and light manufacturing sectors. ♦ Last month marked the close of USAID's Participant Training Program. Since 1995, the program helped over 7,000

BiH senior and middle level professionals, and political and business leaders to enhance their knowledge and skills through 326 training programs in 35 countries throughout the world. ♦ A recent survey found that members of the USAID-supported wood processing cluster have doubled their sales over the past 3 years. Exports grew by 140% during the same period.

BIH TOURISM EXHIBIT WOWS VISITORS AT WORLD FAIR

When visitors to the world's-largest tourism fair arrived at Bosnia-Herzegovina's booth, they didn't find just the standard photos and brochures. Instead, they were actually invited to take a stroll across the country.

The exhibit, funded by USAID, won first prize at the World Travel Market (WTM) in London, the largest tourism fair in the world. Over 200 countries and 5,500 exhibitors participated in the fair. The BiH booth was recognized for its unique interactive design

which invites people to get to know the country by walking inside two large wheels that rotate to display BiH's many scenic sites.

USAID Mission Director Jane Nandy helped to present the booth to the BiH public in a ceremony held at the Vijećnica Building (Old Library) in Sarajevo. Support for the booth is part of USAID's efforts to promote BiH as a tourism destination. The local company Arhilab's design pro-



USAID Mission Director Jane Nandy prepares to don headphones to listen to a description of the sites depicted inside the wheel

"This is a true success. The new stand really helped us to attract the attention of visitors. It provoked great interest in our cultural and historical tours and outdoor programs. We've already signed some new contracts."

--Mili Bijavica of Fortuna Travel from Mostar.

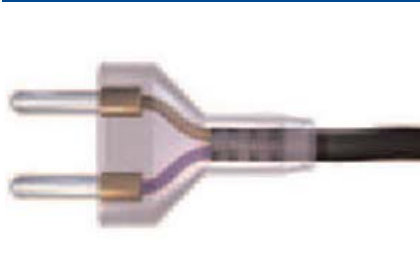
posal was chosen from among 8 others through a competitive process. Other assistance has included production of the "Enjoy Life" promotional video spots and the creation and promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina's tourism brand. These efforts contributed to a 19% increase in tourist arrivals to BiH this year.

LAW



This year, Mostar's Dzermal Bijedic Law Faculty took responsibility for organizing the annual Moot Court competition started by USAID. The Competition is a simulation of a trial before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. USAID congratulates the Tuzla Law Faculty for its win over 7 competitors.

ENERGY



A USAID survey showed that more than 80% of BiH citizens are unaware they have the power to influence the price of electricity. Power utility companies (EPs) must justify any request to increase prices. The law enables citizens to participate in public hearings considering their proposals.

LENDING



The success of the BiH microcredit sector was shown in a recent Forbes Magazine survey of 461 microcredit organizations. Five BiH ones were rated among the top 50 in the world. EKI, Partner and Mikrofin, respectively rated 14, 18 and 24th, have been key partners in USAID economic programs.

Early Education Key to Bird Flu Prevention



Children study booklets portraying safe practices to prevent transmission of bird flu

When it comes to bird flu, USAID believes that prevention offers the best chance for saving lives. This is especially true when it's the lives of children that hang in the balance.

According to UNICEF almost half of the fatalities related to avian influenza to date have been children. Because of this, USAID has prepared for a potential avian influenza outbreak by supporting a community-based information campaign that teaches children and families actions they can take to prevent the potential spread of the killer disease. These good practices can prevent the spread of other diseases as well. The campaign is implemented by UNICEF and facilitated by SOS Kinderdorf.

Workshops with children and families have been held in schools, rural

communities with little access to mass media, and among the Roma. Although avian influenza has not been documented in BiH, the invisible



threat is present. Scientists fear that a new strain, transmissible among humans, could potentially kill up to 50 million people.

Behaviors to prevent the disease include good hygienic habits, separating domestic birds from wild ones, and cooking poultry meat and eggs at over 75 degrees Celsius.

NGO Analyzes Government Performance

Reports generate extensive press coverage

For the first time ever, BiH citizens have access to an objective and systematic analysis of the work of their governments. And unfortunately, the picture is not pretty.

With USAID support, the Centers for Civic Initiatives (CCI) have published a series of reports analyzing the performance of BiH's Council of Ministers and state and entity-level parliaments. Findings for the first 10 months of 2007 included the following:

The Council of Ministers implemented only 25% of its annual plan. The government's worst performers were the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees.

The BiH Parliament effectively worked for only 11-and-a-half days and passed only 21 of the planned 135 laws.

The "champion of poor performance," according to CCI monitor Lejla Deronja-Suljic, was the Federation Parliament which failed to adopt even its own action plan.

Findings in Republika Srpska were slightly better with the RS government having implemented 38% of its planned activities and 58% of its planned laws.

"We are extremely pleased to see the extensive coverage the BiH press has given to the CCI reports," says USAID Mission Director Jane Nandy. "Information such as this will help BiH citizens hold their government accountable when it's time to go to the ballot box. Moreover, I applaud CCI for not only pointing out areas in need of improvement, but also offering suggested remedies."

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